

Town of Westford ~ East Boston Camps Acquisition

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The Board of Selectmen will hold a discussion regarding the East Boston Camps acquisition at their next meeting on Tuesday, November 23, 2004, during Open Forum scheduled for 7:30PM.

A MESSAGE FROM THE TOWN MANAGER ON THE TOWN'S ACQUISITION OF EAST BOSTON CAMPS

It is with great excitement that I am announcing a unique opportunity for the Town to obtain what many consider the jewel of Westford, namely, the East Boston Camps.

This 286 acre parcel of pristine beauty is currently owned by the Hyams Foundation, a not for profit corporation.

This announcement is the result of over an 11 month partnership between the Trust for Public Land (TPL), the Westford Land Preservation Foundation (WLPF) and the Town.

In January of this year, the Town entered into an agreement with TPL, a non profit conservation organization to attempt to negotiate a purchase with the Hyams Foundation. Because of resources unique to TPL, they were the negotiators of the purchase, with the Town and WLPF providing input and advice. Nellie Aikenhead was the negotiator for TPL, and Nancy Rosinski of the WLPF provided countless hours of research, brainstorming and advice.

In very oversimplified terms, TPL will be purchasing the property and in turn, selling it to the Town for \$13.5 million. The Town will apply to the Community Preservation Committee for funding from the Community Preservation Act proceeds as well as seeking a \$500,000 Drinking Water Protection grant. WLPF will also pursue private fundraising as well as funding from other not for profit groups.

Part of the agreement with the Hyams Foundation is that there be continued access to programs for the youth of Boston and Chelsea on the site. The Town will negotiate a Memorandum of Understanding with the Hyams on exactly how this will work.

The Board of Selectmen will be asked to call a Special Town Meeting for late January 2005. This will be discussed at the 11/23/04 Selectmen's meeting.

Obviously, the question is, what will the Town do with the property? If funded by Community Preservation Act proceeds, only CPA sanctioned uses are allowed. I have appointed an East Boston Camps Global Use Committee consisting of the Chairs, or designees of the following Boards; Selectmen; Recreation; Community Preservation Committee; Affordable Housing, Conservation Commission, Historic Commission, Board of Water Commissioners and WLPF. Staff associated to the aforementioned Committees will serve in ex-officio capacity. The goal is to reach consensus on the use of the site in a macro sense. I want to reach consensus by Thanksgiving. This will enable private fund raising as well as publicity for the Town Meeting to proceed with clearer focus.

If Town Meeting votes favorably to purchase EBC, more formal master planning will occur, based on the global use plan.

Once again, this is an important time for the Town. I am proud to have been part of this undertaking and to work with some fantastic people.

Please contact me at sledoux@westford.mec.edu with any comments that you may have regarding the future use of the property. I welcome your input on this important purchase.

Steven L. Ledoux
Town Manager